DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 165 560 HE 010 798

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TITLE A Response to Increasing Faculty Resource Constraints: The Development of Umbrella Academic Programs and New Curricular Aggregates from Existing Instructional Resources.
PUB DATE Aug 78
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Conference of the Society for College and University Planning (Hollywood, Florida, July-August 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Curriculum; College Instruction; *Curriculum Development; Degrees (Titles); Departments; Higher Education; *Interdisciplinary Approach; *Organizational Change; *Program Development; *Relevance (Education); Retrenchment; State Universities
IDENTIFIERS California State University Dominguez Hills; San Diego State University CA

ABSTRACT

In an era of shrinking financial support for programmatic development as a result of reduced levels of funding from government sources and the concurrent influx of steady state, colleges and universities need to explore new alternatives. Two curricular planning strategies are addressed in this paper in response to this dilemma, one involving the creation of umbrella academic programs under the guise of an interdisciplinary framework, the other involving the reorganization of existing instructional resources into new programmatic aggregates. Examples of each strategy at two state universities are provided. The interdisciplinary example is the Behavioral Science Graduate Program, housed within the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, at California State University, Dominguez Hills. The second approach is exemplified by a number of curricular programs at California State University, Dominguez Hills and San Diego State University, and it can be applied to any type of program, including a minor, an undergraduate degree program, or a graduate degree program. Their programmatic appeal to students and their cost-effective appeal to the university community are cited. It is contended that both approaches are necessary to retain the development of quality programmatic growth at colleges and universities. This growth is necessary for meeting the needs of students, both in terms of their interests and of their employability upon graduation. (Author/LBH)

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A RESPONSE TO INCREASING FACULTY RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF UMBRELLA ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND NEW CURRICULAR AGGREGATES FROM EXISTING INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

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HE010798

Society for College and University Planning Conference
July-August 1978
Hollywood, Florida

ABSTRACT

In an era of shrinking financial support for programmatic development as a result of reduced levels of funding from government sources and the concurrent influx of steady state, colleges and universities need to explore new alternatives. Two curricular planning strategies are addressed in this paper in response to this dilemma, one involving the creation of umbrella academic programs under the guise of an interdisciplinary framework, the other involving the reorganization of existing instructional resources into new programmatic aggregates. The authors provide examples of each strategy at two state universities and cite their programmatic appeal to students and their cost-effective appeal to the university community.

A RESPONSE TO INCREASING FACULTY RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF UMBRELLA ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND NEW CURRICULAR AGGREGATES FROM EXISTING INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

In an era when colleges and universities are faced with severe budgetary constraints as a result of reduced levels of funding from state and federal governments and the concurrent influx of steady state, it is next to impossible to provide for the continued development of new academic programs. This paper is designed to provide a response to this dilemma through a discussion of two curricular planning strategies which provide for academic growth but with minimum resource proliferation.

The first of these strategies involves the creative reorganization and utilization of resources toward the development of umbrella academic programs under the guise of an interdisciplinary framework. An example of the utilization of this approach, one which we are very familiar with, is the Behavioral Science Graduate Program, housed within the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, at California State University, Dominguez Hills. The basic philosophy of the program focuses upon the acquisition of skills and knowledge by students which cross-cut traditional academic boundaries of specialization. In this way, it is assumed, the student gains the theoretical and methodological perspectives of a number of academic disciplines (in this case, Anthropology, Communication, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology), rather than the narrow perspective of only one. We feel this approach provides the student with better preparation and professional mobility, when he/she becomes a working practitioner in the field, as the majority of these students do. It is the position of the program that whatever field the student embarks upon after

graduation, such as employment counseling, probationary work, social work, personnel specialization, health services work, or marriage and family counseling, no one generic discipline alone can provide him/her the tools necessary to solve problems associated with human behavior. The program is designed to prepare the student for the variety of situations he/she may encounter as a professional, whether they have psychological, sociological, cultural, or political implications. The major thrust behind this program is the application of concepts within and between the generic disciplines of the behavioral sciences to practical situations.

As far as the resources for the program are concerned, there is a small core of interdisciplinary faculty members assigned to the program, as well as the services of faculty from the departments of Anthropology, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology. In this way, the program becomes extremely cost-effective. Additional economic advantages in offering such a program in this manner lie in the fact that: (1) In essence, the University is able to offer graduate programs in three different areas (each student focusing upon one of the existing options in the program -- Applied Behavioral Science, Gerontology, or Sociology), with the basic cost of one department chairperson (having release time of one course per quarter term to assume the responsibilities associated with this post), one department secretary, and one department office; and (2) The faculty workload is spread over four different academic departments, thus it is absorbed within the normal faculty and clerical allocations for these instructional areas.

An additional advantage to the program, and one which responds to the demand for academic planning growth, is the relative ease with which a new programmatic focus can be generated as an option within

the program. It is accomplished with far greater ease than that encountered in the development of a new academic degree program. Generally speaking, each time a new option has been developed for the Behavioral Science Graduate Program, the courses which were necessary for its support were already in existence. (It is also far easier to eliminate an option which is no longer in demand than it is for a regular degree program, since it does not involve the elimination of faculty or an entire department.)

This interdisciplinary approach provides for the development and implementation of a number of otherwise financially unfeasible generic programs. It offers the student a greater range of programs to choose from, easier access to graduate work (since any undergraduate major is acceptable for admission, at least to this particular program) than might be the case for a generic program, and broader exposure to academic concepts. To the university, the approach offers potential enrollment, better communication among its academic units, an ability to remain competitive with other universities, and additional identity within the community.

Two additional graduate programs have been proposed at Dominguez Hills, one on the university academic master plan and one currently undergoing the formal approval process, which utilize this formula. The first, a master of arts degree in Social Science, will incorporate the theoretical and methodological perspectives of Economics, Geography, History, and Political Science. The second, a master of arts degree in the Humanities, will contain components from Art, History, Literature, Music, Philosophy, and Theater Arts. At a subsequent stage of the development of these programs, it is assumed, options in some of these discipline areas will emerge.

The second of these strategies involves the creative aggregation of existing courses into a new interdisciplinary framework, augmented, if necessary, by a minimum number of courses identified by the prefix of that aggregate. This approach can be exemplified by a number of curricular programs at California State University, Dominguez Hills and San Diego State University; the approach can be applied to any type of program, a minor, an undergraduate degree program, or a graduate degree program.

Three minors were developed at Dominguez Hills in recent years with no proliferation of new courses and at no cost for a program coordinator or program office. The first, Microbiology, in the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, is coordinated by the Biological Science department and utilizes existing courses from that department, as well as from the Chemistry department. The second, Psychobiology, is designed to provide a student with an interdisciplinary framework to the subject areas around which Psychology and Biology overlap. The program is, therefore, co-administered by the two departments and features courses only from these two academic disciplines. A student is given advising from either of these two departments, depending upon the academic area from which he/she emanates. The third, Religious Studies, in the School of Humanities and Fine Arts, is designed to provide a student with an interdisciplinary examination of the historical, philosophical, behavioral, and humanistic aspects of religion. The program is administered by an interdisciplinary committee, consisting of representatives from the instructional components of the minor, Anthropology, History, Philosophy, and Sociology. While the program does have a chairperson, his responsibilities

are assumed among his other campus duties, precluding any expense to the campus instructional workload.

Several majors currently offered at Dominguez Hills serve as further examples of this curricular planning approach. The first, Computer Science, was developed (and at present is undergoing the formal approval process) through a number of discussions between representatives of the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and the School of Management and, therefore, contains a number of existing courses from each. In order to implement the program, two new courses have been developed and four others have been restructured and relabelled (to assume the Computer Science prefix) from the minor in Information Science program (which at a subsequent date will be relabelled as a minor in Computer Science). This program will be administered by a coordinator, who will receive release time of one course per quarter term for this purpose. The second, Human Services, in the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, is a single-field major, augmented by a strong experiential component. Three options are available to students in this program: (1) Neonate and Young Child; (2) Adolescent and Young Adult; and (3) Gerontology. All courses contained within this interdisciplinary program are assigned to other departments; therefore, there is no instructional cost which can be ascribed to the program. In addition, the coordinator and her support staff are funded by a grant from the federal government. The program generates substantial enrollment for the university and yet costs the campus no more than the office space it occupies.

The third, Industrial Management, in the School of Management, is directed at community college graduates with an appropriate technical or vocational education, who either hold supervisory positions in

industry or who aspire to them. The single-field major consists of courses from a number of academic disciplines, including Business Administration, Mathematics, and Physics, in addition to an Experiential Education component and a Liberal Arts core. To augment these existing courses, five new courses were developed for the program. The coordinator receives release time of one course per quarter term; in addition, the University provides an office and a secretary for the program. The fourth, Labor Studies, in the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, is designed to provide the student with a balanced, interdisciplinary curriculum for the study of the origins, development, and status of organized labor, a particular emphasis being placed upon the movement as it relates to the historical, economical, and social issues of this century. This major was developed with the cooperation of a Labor Advisory Committee and in cooperation with labor studies programs at local community colleges. Two concentrations are available to students in this program, the first placing an emphasis upon professional trade union leadership skills in order to prepare the student for a career in unions, employee associations, labor related governmental agencies, and the private sector, and the second offering an appropriate background for the liberal arts student preparing for postgraduate work in labor studies or for a professional career in labor law or journalism. The program is administered by a coordinator, who receives release time of one course per quarter term for this purpose, and by an interdisciplinary committee, comprised of representatives from the departments of Anthropology, History, and Sociology. The major consists of courses from a number of academic disciplines, including Anthropology,

Economics, History, Political Science, and Sociology. In addition to these existing courses, six new courses were developed for the program.

The fifth, Liberal Studies, housed in a unit on campus known as University College, is administered by a coordinator, who is given release time of one course per quarter term to assume this post, and an interdisciplinary committee, made up of representatives from a number of academic areas. The program is designed to provide the student with a broad foundation in the liberal arts and sciences; courses are selected upon advisement by the student from the School of Humanities and Fine Arts, the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, and the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. This single-field major was developed totally from existing courses. A number of students have used this major as a means for completing the undergraduate requirements for a multiple subjects teaching credential.

At the graduate level, two programs serve as examples for this curricular planning approach. The first, a master of science degree program in Marriage, Family, and Child Counseling, has been proposed at California State University, Dominguez Hills, and is currently undergoing the formal approval process. Though the coordinator for this program will be given release time of one course per quarter term, it will not involve any loss of instructional workload for the University, since this individual will be spending this time locating sites and arranging the placement of students for the practicum portion of the program. The administration of the program will be handled through the Behavioral Science Graduate Program, precluding any cost in the form of a departmental office

or secretary, since both already exist for the latter program. The only new course which will be developed solely for this program will be the practicum; all other courses necessary to support the new degree already exist in the Behavioral Science curricular offerings.

The second, a master of science degree program in Mass Communications, is currently offered at San Diego State University, within the College of Professional Studies. The program is administered by a coordinator, who receives release time of one course per semester term for this purpose, and an inter-disciplinary committee, consisting of representatives from its instructional components, Film, Journalism, Psychology, Sociology, Speech Communication, and Telecommunications. No core courses are featured within the program, as it utilizes only existing courses from these six departments. To add to this cost-effectiveness, the program does not require a departmental office or secretary, but rather operates from the coordinator and the committee resources. The instructional requirements for completion of the degree are spread over the various departments involved (a minimum of three), so that all profit by the program through increased enrollments in a number of course offerings.

This curricular planning approach, like the first one, provides for the development and implementation of a number of otherwise financially unfeasible academic programs. These programs are necessary to the growth of a university, in order that it can remain competitive with other campuses and so that it can offer its students a wide range of possible majors and

minors from which to choose. At a time when programs are being challenged for their applied potential, this approach can do two things: (1) It can provide for the development of applied programs otherwise too costly, such as Microbiology; and (2) It can pick up the enrollment in departments in which it is sagging through its interdisciplinary framework. Other obvious benefits to the university include the additional identity in the community, better communication among academic departments, and additional student enrollment.

It is our contention that both approaches are necessary to retain the development of quality programmatic growth at colleges and universities. This growth is necessary for meeting the needs of students, both in terms of their interests and in terms of their employability upon graduation. These particular strategies are viable and respond to the need for curricular planning at a time when faculty resources are growing exceedingly tighter. The approaches we have suggested lead to the kind of development which must take place at institutions of higher learning, if they are to remain a force in society, with little or no cost to the universities and with maximum payoff both to the student and the instructional process itself.